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SU, SY, SZ, TBIO, IV
SUBJECT: (U) ACTION COMPLETED: IDENTIFYING "CREDIBLE
VOICES" IN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES THAT REJECT VIOLENCE

REF: SECSTATE 122288

11. (SBU) Embassy Abidjan completed action requested in reftel. Here is the biographic information on three influential Ivoirian Muslim leaders who have favorable views of the United States and offer an alternative view to Islamic extremism.

12. (SBU) El Hadj Aboubacar FOFANA
Gender: Male
DOB: February 21, 1943
POB: Cote d'Ivoire
Sect: Sunni

Background: El Hadj Fofana has a diploma in commerce from the University of Cairo (Jamuatou Kahira). He is a retired Director of Human Resources at the Societe Ivoirienne de Banque, the largest Ivoirian bank. He is Imam of the Aghien Mosque in Abidjan and chairman of the Higher Council of Imams, the largest association of imams in Cote d'Ivoire. He speaks Malinke, French, Arabic, and English.

Imam Aboubacar Fofana is one of the most prominent and influential leaders of the Muslim community in Cote d'Ivoire. He is one of the architects of the current organization of the Muslim community and the modernization of the teaching and practice of Islam in Cote d'Ivoire. He was also at the root of the creation of the various Muslim associations: Muslim Students, Associations (AEEMCI), Muslim Women,s Associations, the National Islamic Council (CNI), the Ivorian League of Muslim Preachers (LIPCI) and the Higher Council of Imams (COSIM).

In 2002, Imam Aboubacar Fofana was selected by Post to participate in the International Visitors, Program. However, a few days before his return to Cote d'Ivoire, the September 19, 2002 war broke out and an imam was killed by pro-government militias while others received death threats. Imam Aboubacar Fofana believed that he would be the next imam killed because he was the spokesperson for COSIM and therefore for the Muslim community. Imam Fofana has publicly denounced the treatment of Ivoirian Muslims and had been accused of fomenting the rebellion.

Imam Aboubacar Fofana decided to remain in the US and to apply for asylum. He spent four years in the U.S. where he reorganized the Ivorian as well as the West African Muslim community. On April 25, 2006, Imam Fofana was designated chairman of COSIM by its members. He therefore returned to Cote d,Ivoire on October 25, 2006 after four years of exile in the United States to assume the role of supreme guide of Muslims in Cote d,Ivoire.

13. (SBU) El Hadj Idriss Koudoss KONE
Gender: Male

DOB: March 13, 1948
POB: Cote d'Ivoire
Sect: Sunni

Background: Imam Kone has a diploma in financial and economic studies from the National School of Administration of Rabat, Morocco. He is a retired civil servant and former State budget auditor at the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Kone is the Imam of the Bilal Mosque in Abidjan and is the Chairman of the Executive Board of the National Islamic Council (CNI), the largest federation of Muslim associations.

He is a member of COSIM; Chairman of the Board of Administration of the National Committee for Organizing the Pilgrimage to Mecca (CNOPM); Chairman of the Board of Administration of Radio Al Bayane; Chairman of the Board of Administration of the Islamic Religious Schools Group (IQRA).

Since 2005, Imam Kone has been a member of the Executive Committee for the Support to the World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace. He is also a member of the World General Assembly for the Convergence of Islamic Legal Schools and a member of the Collective of Religious Confessions for Peace. Imam Kone speaks French and Arabic.

As chairman of the largest federation of Islamic associations, El Hadj Idriss Koudouss Kone is a highly visible and influential leader of the Muslim community in Cote d'Ivoire. He serves as an intermediary between the government and the Muslim community and between the international community and the Ivoirian Muslim community. As such, he is very often invited by important Christian groups to participate in conferences in Europe on interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims. He has also been invited to international seminars on the various Islamic legal schools in the Arab world. Imam Kone was instrumental with a few other religious and NGO leaders in preventing outbreak of war on September 19, 2002 in Cote d'Ivoire from becoming a war between Christians and Muslims.

14. (SBU) El Hadj Djiguiba CISSE

Gender: Male
DOB: 1958
POB: Cote d'Ivoire
Sect: Sunni

Background: Imam Cisse has a Bachelor's degree in English from the University of Abidjan, a diploma from the Arabic Language Institute in Saudi Arabia, and a Bachelor of Arts from the King Abdul Aziz University in Saudi Arabia. He is a member of several prominent social organizations including the National Committee Against AIDS, the National Committee against the Worst Forms of Traditional Practices. He is a founding member of the National Forum of Religious Groups in Cote d'Ivoire. Imam Cisse is imam of the Plateau Mosque in Abidjan. He is also Vice President of the National Islamic Council, spokesman for COSIM, Director General of Radio Al Bayane, and founder of the most important Islamic humanitarian NGO in Cote d'Ivoire, the Djigui Foundation. He speaks Malinke, French and English.

As Imam of the Plateau Mosque (since 1988), Deputy Spokesperson, then Spokesperson for the COSIM (since 1998 and 2006), Vice President of the National Islamic Council (since 1993), host of nationally televised Islamic Information Programs (since 1988), and Director General of Radio Al Bayane (since 2001), Imam Cisse is a highly visible and influential leader of Ivorian Muslims.

His influence is far reaching because very knowledgeable, articulate and open-minded. He is often invited by national and international organizations as well as by the government to participate in conferences in Cote d'Ivoire and abroad on various issues including interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims and national reconciliation. Imam Cisse is also well-respected by young middle class Ivoirian Muslims because through his foundation, he fought against the harmful traditional practices that prevalent in the Ivoirian Muslim community (i.e., forced and early marriage for young girls, lack of schooling for young Muslim girls, and female

genital mutilation (FGM)).

Imam Cisse well and favorably known to the US Embassy. In 1995, Post selected him to participate in an International Visitors, Program on Ethnicity and Pluralism in the United States. In 2005, his foundation, the Djiguiba Foundation received ESF funding to carry out public awareness campaigns about FGM and other harmful traditional practices in Abidjan.

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